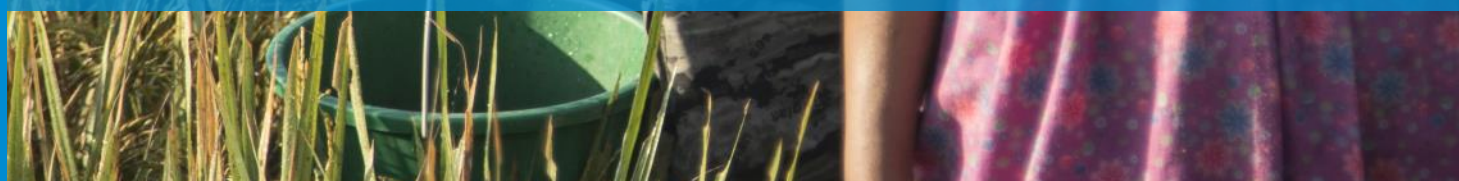




# **Pro-Smallholder Food Assistance**

A Strategy for Boosting Smallholder Resilience  
and Market Access Worldwide





Cover image: Champa Chaudary  
and her husband water  
vegetation in Sarlahi village,  
Rautahat District, Nepal.  
*WFP/Santosh Shahi*

FFA participants construct half-  
moons from soil to improve water  
conservation in Koumari village,  
Dosso, Niger.  
*WFP/Rein Skullerud*





## Background and Rationale

Smallholders number over 500 million worldwide.<sup>1</sup> They produce much of the world's food but face major challenges in profitable market engagement. Due to their physical, economic, social, and political marginalization, most smallholders pursue low-productivity, subsistence-oriented livelihoods that support meagre and unhealthy diets. Millions of them are therefore chronically food insecure and vulnerable to shocks.

Without empowered and resilient smallholders operating as competitive actors in food systems, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 2.3 to double smallholder productivity and incomes by 2030 is not achievable. All actors with relevant strengths, knowledge, and capacities must take deliberate steps to support national pro-smallholder efforts and investments.

Smallholders feature prominently in many of the World Food Programme's (WFP's) food assistance initiatives, either as beneficiaries, or as sources of locally procured food. As captured in its Strategic Plan 2017-2021, WFP is fully committed to Agenda 2030 and especially to leaving no one behind, including smallholders. At issue for WFP is how to most effectively leverage its attributes and partnerships in support of national efforts to boost productivity, resilience, and market access for smallholders. This document presents WFP's strategy for **"pro-smallholder food assistance"** – where food assistance is defined not as old-style "food aid" handouts of physical food commodities, but rather as a comprehensive range of instruments, activities, and platforms that together empower vulnerable and food-insecure people and communities to access nutritious food.<sup>2</sup>

## Why WFP?

WFP occupies a unique position and role at the intersection of short-term humanitarian action and longer-term hunger reduction. Food assistance is an inherently public endeavour, but one that is based on many layers of private activity. WFP is thus able to work with a wide range of partners to design and implement innovative solutions to many causes and consequences of smallholder vulnerability and food insecurity. Especially potent is WFP's ability to combine deep competency in comprehensive food security analysis, livelihood programming, and

monitoring with strong capacity in practical but innovative food supply chain management.

A major aim of this strategy is therefore to overcome the simplistic perception of WFP's role in rural areas as a mere deliverer of unsustainable food handouts to passive recipients. The message is that, working closely with partners, WFP possesses a wide array of capacities to develop context-specific solutions to fundamental challenges facing smallholders. These solutions entail innovations that build resilience, increase market access, and bridge emergency relief, recovery, and long-term development contexts.

## Foundations, Scope, and Audience

Pro-smallholder food assistance draws on principles and priorities set out in a number of corporate policies that address issues vital to smallholders. These include policies on Food Procurement in Developing Countries (2006), Safety Nets (2012), School Feeding (2013), Building Resilience for Food Security and Nutrition (2015), South-South Cooperation (2015), Gender (2017), Environment (2017), Climate Change (2017), and Nutrition (2017).

In addition to this comprehensive normative framework, programme guidance materials have been developed for most smallholder-facing initiatives. These include Food Assistance for Assets, Smallholder Agricultural Market Support, Home Grown School Meals, Food Procurement, Nutrition, Food Quality and Safety, and Systemic Food Assistance.

Despite these supportive policies and guidance documents, still lacking is a framework that provides an integrated view of WFP's pro-smallholder portfolio and establishes a unified rationale for its component thrusts. This strategy fills that gap, but not as an operational guide. Rather, the strategy aims to support leaders and relevant staff at country and regional levels as they shape and promote food assistance initiatives that can address the challenges and opportunities facing smallholders in their countries and regions. It also targets counterparts in host country government and partner agencies charged with overseeing policies and investments related to food assistance, as well as agricultural and broader rural development.

<sup>1</sup> The meaning of the term "smallholders" is that found in Agenda 2030 in which smallholders include small-scale farmers, fishers, foresters, and pastoralists.

<sup>2</sup> A detailed background paper to the strategy is available at: [www1.wfp.org/food-systems](http://www1.wfp.org/food-systems)

## WFP's Smallholder Support Portfolio

WFP's portfolio of smallholder-facing food assistance initiatives has been developed steadily over many years. It is now wide and deep, covering the bulk of the organization's countries of operation. The current scale and reach of the portfolio are significant.

- Long-standing **Food Assistance for Assets (FFA)** programmes deploying the **Three-Pronged Approach (3PA)** to context analysis and livelihood programming seek to enhance the resilience of smallholder livelihoods. In 2016, FFA programmes directly and indirectly benefited 23.7 million people in 53 countries, most of them smallholders.
- The **Purchase for Progress (P4P)** programme leverages demand for food from WFP and other institutional buyers in support of smallholders. In 2016, P4P initiatives in 35 countries supported more than 1.5 million members of 1,000 smallholder farmer organizations, generating benefits for up to 7.5 million people.
- **Home Grown School Meals (HGSM)** initiatives connect smallholder farmers to school meals programmes. These are highly prized by governments and regional bodies worldwide. HGSM programmes were supported in 45 countries in 2016.
- The **Rural Resilience Initiative (R4)** enables vulnerable rural households to increase their food and income security in the face of increasing climate risks through comprehensive risk management, featuring uptake of new technologies linked to access to crop insurance, savings, and credit. In 2016, R4 reached 40,000 farmers in four African countries, with benefits for 200,000 people.
- The **Post-Harvest Loss (PHL)** initiative promotes affordable post-harvest management technologies and practices that cut post-harvest losses significantly. 93,000 smallholders in Uganda received support in 2016.
- The **Farm to Market Alliance (FtMA, formerly known as the Patient Procurement Platform)** is based on a global partnership with large private companies. It seeks to boost

smallholder incomes through formal long-term contracts backed by facilitation of key value chain services. FtMA reached over 70,000 farmers with training and other forms of support in three pilot countries.

- The **Virtual Farmers Market (VFM)** pilot initiative deploys an app-based digital marketplace approach to connect farmers and buyers, enabling them to more easily and transparently negotiate prices and complete transactions.

## Strategic Framework

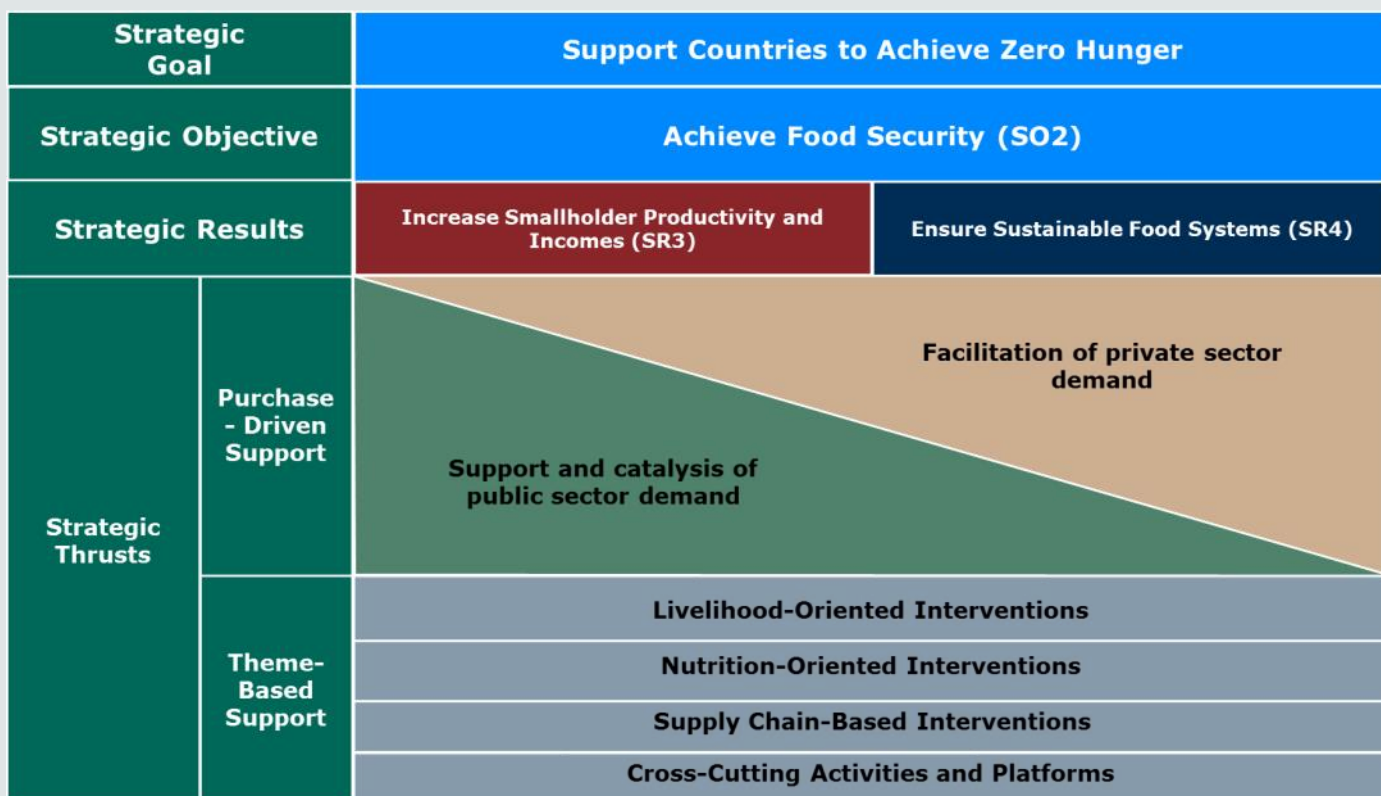
The strategic framework for pro-smallholder food assistance builds directly on the perspective on smallholders signalled in WFP's Strategic Plan 2017-2021, which seeks to leverage WFP's core capacities and accumulated experience in ways that support national efforts to achieve the SDGs. Specifically, the strategy falls under corporate Strategic Objective 2 to Achieve Food Security. Under this Strategic Objective, smallholders are the focus of Strategic Result (SR) 3, which is SDG Target 2.3 to boost their productivity and incomes. Smallholders are also strongly implicated in SR4 (SDG Target 2.4) that aims to ensure sustainable food systems (Figure 1 and Table 1).

Two impact pathways are therefore implied. Pro-smallholder food assistance measures contribute to SR3 if they include investments, activities and partnerships that lead to enduring livelihood changes that promote food security at the level of households or targeted vulnerable populations. Measures contribute to SR4 if they include investments, activities and partnerships that have system-level food security-enhancing impacts beyond the short- and medium-term needs of immediate participants, if any, in WFP programmes.

## Strategic Thrusts

Two strategic thrusts are identified, depending on whether support to smallholders is driven by food purchases or rests on theme-based interventions. Integration across the two thrusts is possible and encouraged.

**Figure 1:** Strategic framework for pro-smallholder food assistance



**Table 1:** WFP's pro-smallholder portfolio viewed through the strategic framework

Strategic Thrust	WFP's Pro-Smallholder Food Assistance Interventions and Initiatives	
Purchase-Driven Support	Primary Demand Source	
	Public	Private
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purchase for Progress (P4P)</li> <li>Home Grown School Meals (HGSM)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farm to Market Alliance (FtMA)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Virtual Farmers Market (VFM)</li> </ul>	
Theme-Based Support	<b>Livelihood-Oriented:</b> Food Assistance for Assets (FFA); Rural Resilience Initiative (R4)	
	<b>Supply Chain-Oriented:</b> Post-Harvest Loss (PHL) Initiative; Logistics	
	<b>Nutrition-Oriented:</b> Nutrition-specific measures; Nutrition-sensitive measures	
	<b>Cross-Cutting Activities and Platforms:</b> Three-Pronged Approach (3PA); gender analysis; vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM); market analysis; food safety and quality control and improvement; national capacity development, institutional innovation, and policy reform (especially within social protection and safety net systems)	



Adamu Alidu, Balchisu Iddrisu, Amishetu Salifu, and Samata Dawuda winnow rice at a P4P project site in Nyankpala, Northern Region, Ghana.  
WFP/Nyani Quarmyne



**Purchase-driven activities** relate to initiatives using WFP's demand-side pro-smallholder market development approach. There are two main types of demand:

- *Public sector demand*, either from WFP<sup>3</sup>, or from other public institutions, especially national bodies (e.g., national food reserves, schools, hospitals, armies). The P4P and HGSM initiatives fall into this category; and
- *Private sector demand*, which WFP can catalyse, facilitate, and shape to create long-term links between farmers, buyers, financiers, and input suppliers. The FtMA initiative falls into this category.

As detailed in the Smallholder Agricultural Market Support Guidance, this categorization is not strict but rather a matter of degree. P4P and HGSM often involve facilitation of private demand, and FtMA may leverage public demand. The digital approach represented by VFM is relevant to both categories. The key recognition is that each of these initiatives employs the same core demand-driven model, seeks the same outcomes, and requires the same kinds of transformative partnerships, albeit with distinct emphases and organizational requirements.

**Theme-based activities** target the many drivers of vulnerability and food insecurity facing smallholders due to their physical and economic

isolation. This isolation, in turn, is often linked to their social and political marginalization. WFP's strengths, knowledge and capacities signal three broad categories of interventions:

- *Livelihood-oriented interventions* that focus on community-based investments in soil conservation, water source development, irrigation infrastructure, and multiple forms of community and household asset creation and conservation (e.g., FFA and R4);
- *Supply chain-oriented interventions* that seek to improve the physical, technical, and organizational dimensions of food supply chains (e.g., PHL); and
- *Nutrition-oriented interventions*, both nutrition-specific measures that address the direct causes of smallholder undernutrition, and nutrition-sensitive measures that apply a nutrition improvement lens to smallholder support investments.

Several corporate analytical and organizational platforms underpin both purchase-driven and theme-based initiatives: 3PA, gender analysis, vulnerability analysis and mapping, market analysis, food safety and quality control and improvement. Pro-smallholder capacity development, innovation, and reform of national agencies, institutions, and policies are prioritized, where appropriate embedded within social protection and safety net systems.

<sup>3</sup> WFP is committed to traceably sourcing at least 10 percent of its annual food needs from smallholders by 2021.

Each of WFP's purchase-driven and theme-based interventions can stand on its own and generate significant benefits for targeted smallholders. Much greater value can be generated through **integrated measures**. A number of successful examples of integration exist or are being actively explored. For example, in Ghana, school meals caterers have procured food from P4P-supported smallholder farmer organizations (FOs). In El Salvador and Honduras, families affected by coffee rust have received vouchers for redemption for food in local shops supplied by P4P-supported FOs. In Rwanda, Uganda, and Zambia, P4P-supported farmers have produced nutritious bio-fortified beans for school meals programmes and also for home consumption. In Malawi and Uganda, FFA, R4, PHL, and P4P activities are being deliberately combined, aiming to boost resilience to climate risks and other shocks, on one hand, and improve food aggregation, storage, quality management, and market linkages, on the other.

Explicit efforts to develop guidance for integrated activities have commenced. In all cases, careful targeting, geographical coordination, and proper sequencing of activities are vital, aiming for context-specific trajectories to enhanced productivity and resilience. The private sector is the engine of sustainable change and must feature prominently, as must collective action to empower smallholders in markets. Given pervasive gender-based exclusion in many rural areas, deliberate action to enhance gender equality is vital.

## Partnerships

Smallholders face massive challenges that extend well beyond the capacity of WFP to address on its own. In fact, direct intervention by WFP is not assumed. In many contexts, WFP support may be limited to technical assistance and advocacy activities that catalyse or facilitate investments by other actors. The 500 partnerships developed under the P4P initiative signal the profound partnership imperative of pro-smallholder food assistance. The potential of pro-smallholder food assistance springs from opportunities opened up to align and integrate otherwise disconnected investments. Government leadership, private sector commitment, and civil society engagement are fundamental to ensure sustainable and inclusive outcomes. Partnerships to promote gender equality in access to inputs, technologies, finance, and knowledge are especially critical.

As set out in the paper on *Collaboration among the United Nations Rome-based Agencies on Delivering on the 2030 Agenda*, complementary strengths and capacities of WFP and the other two Rome-based UN agencies, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), open considerable scope for enhanced partnership to boost national efforts to enhance smallholder resilience and market engagement and inclusive rural transformation more broadly. Practical considerations based on local experience and analysis should define country-level approaches.

Workers at a mobile factory produce High Energy Biscuits made with ingredients produced by local P4P-supported smallholder farmers, in Kabul, Afghanistan.  
WFP/Alessandro Pavone





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